



# THE FAMILY CONNECTION

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

APRIL 2017

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## Editor's Corner

On March 24, 2017, I had the opportunity to attend the Texas Fatherhood Summit held on the University of Texas campus here in Austin. The keynote speaker was Dr. Cynthia Osborne, Director of the Child and Family Research Partnership, at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. The focus of the conference was on getting fathers to connect themselves with value and providing them with resources for becoming nurturing fathers. When fathers are actively engaged in their children's lives statistics show that the children are:

39% more likely to earn As

45% less likely to repeat a grade

60% less likely to be suspended or expelled

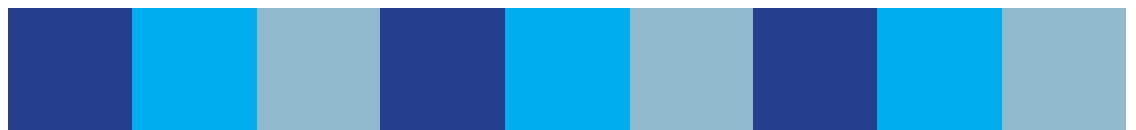
75% less likely to have a teen birth

80% less likely to spend time in jail

2 times as likely to attend college and find stable employment

(As cited in the Child and Family Research Partnership Bulletin, March 2017)

A panel of fathers who were participating in Fatherhood Programs spoke at the conference and shared numerous benefits from their participation in group sessions. They were enrolled in these fatherhood programs because they wanted to become better fathers and they remained in the program because of the connections they developed with the other fathers and because they learned new skills and different ways to interact with their children. The Fatherhood Programs give participants a network of support and help them make different and positive choices in their daily lives. The panelists described how the program provided them with skills to help them improve their relationships with their children, their children's mother and their extended families. Fatherhood Programs are grant funded and are available thru organizations in Fort Worth, Harlingen, Abilene, El Paso, Galveston, and Houston. If you would like more information, you may contact Rebecca Garza, Family Supports Administrator for TJJD at 512-490-7662, [Rebecca.Garza@TJJD.texas.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Garza@TJJD.texas.gov)



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## Gainesville State School Family Day



On January 19, 2017, Gainesville State School hosted Breakfast and Bingo for the Gainesville youth and their families as well as their mentors. Youth and family members enjoyed breakfast, played bingo, took pictures and enjoyed visiting with one another.

One-hundred people attended this event. The Gainesville Student Support Council sponsored the event and provided the meal, bingo prizes, and photographs for both the youth and the families. Due to the great success of the event, Gainesville State School plans to make this an annual event.

## MRTC Hosts an Open House

Families received the opportunity to visit their child's school on February 17, 2017 at the Mart RTC facility. Each family was able to visit with their youth's teachers, view work samples, and have a tour of the campus. The youth were polite, engaging, and with great pride explained what they have been studying and learning in their classrooms. Each youth presented their family members with a rose to show appreciation for the family's support and to welcome them to their school.



## P.A.P.A. Classes taught at McLennan SJCF

This past March, four young fathers became the latest of 36 youth to attend and complete the **Parenting and Paternity Awareness** class taught at the McLennan SCJCF complex in Mart, Texas. The class is offered twice a year while the youth are on break from school. The goal of the class is to promote responsible

parenthood and encourage strong, stable families. The class is a ten-session curriculum covering the legalities of being a father to the emotional impact the father has in his child's life. We want students to gain an understanding of parental responsibilities, the realities and costs of parenting, and to plan for when they would want to have their next child.



The P.A.P.A. class is offered at each of the five high restriction facilities by the Family Liaisons with youth that already have children taking priority for enrollment. The Office of the Texas Attorney General (OAG) developed the curriculum used in the class and the classes introduce the students to the duties of the OAG Child Support Division. TJJD has had 278 young mothers and fathers state wide complete the class since the Family Liaisons were first certified through the Office of the Texas Attorney General in 2012.





## Baptismal Ceremony at Giddings State School

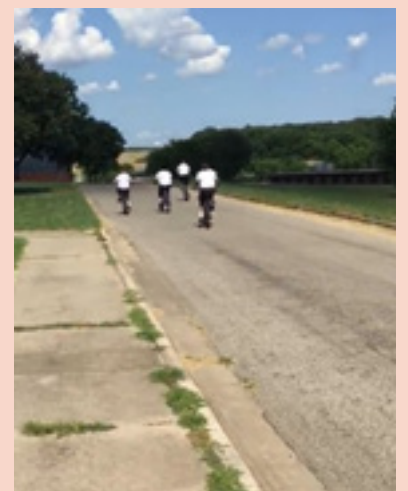
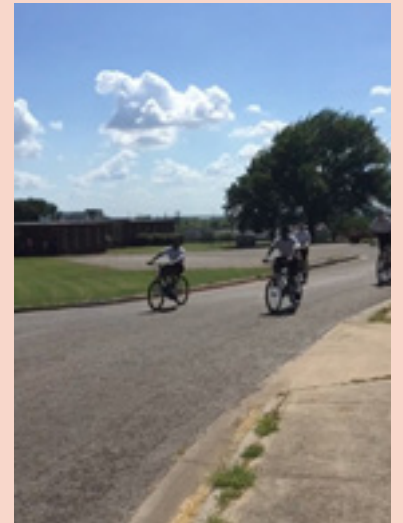
Sixteen young men at Giddings State School chose to commit their lives to Christ by being baptized on Wednesday, March 15, 2017. The youth were submersed in water brought in from the Jordan River that was poured into the baptistery. Readings from the book of John captured the true meaning of baptism. Family members were invited to participate and be their witness. Giddings had the honor of special guest, Teresa Stroud, who graciously handed the Certificates of Baptism to each youth. It was truly a beautiful event that will be an ongoing occurrence in Giddings.

Youth Nicholas Johnson with Senior Director Teresa Stroud and Chaplain Horton.

## Gainesville Bicycle Program

Initially, Gainesville State School purchased three bicycles to use as an incentive for good behavior. The youth were so excited and lined up for the opportunity to be considered to ride a bicycle around campus. Due to the popularity of the bikes, the Gainesville State School Student Support Council purchased three more and the Gainesville State School now has six bikes. The JCO VI of each dorm sets the criteria for use of the bicycles. Such criteria can include positive behavior, good grades or other educational successes, and dorm cleanliness. Once a group of youth on the dorm have met criteria, they are able to ride the bicycles around a specific part of campus.

At the start of one bike ride around campus, an 18.11 year-old young man told the staff, "I learned how to drive a car and shoot a gun, but never learned to ride a bike." The youth's peers stood on both sides of him and helped teach him how to ride the bike. Some of the youth at the Gainesville State School have been forced to grow up so fast that they never had the chance to experience things that most kids do. The thought behind this program is to allow the youth to remember what it is like to be a kid. The big push at Gainesville State School is to prepare youth for what happens once they leave the facility. It is the Superintendent's belief that when the youth here are allowed to take part in activities that kid's in the free participate in, it will allow the youth to see the simple things they are missing out on and help motivate the youth to want to progress and return home.



# Collaboration Produces Success

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department intervenes in the rehabilitation of a youth as soon as he/she arrives on campus. The areas of intervention include education, vocational training, specialized treatment programs, and reentry services.

The Education Reentry Liaisons, onsite at each facility, are committed to assisting TJJD youth with their individual needs regarding preparation for reentry. Services for youth may include career exploration, assessing employment interest and needs, developing employability and advocacy skills, researching post-secondary education and training opportunities, applying for financial aid, developing skills to become college ready, and understanding how to responsibly use social media.

Workforce Development Reentry Specialist (WDRS) are located in three district offices in three major metropolitan areas within the local TJJD parole office. The focus of these positions is to provide facilitation and support to youth regarding preparation and obtainment of employment and linkage and enrollment in vocational training or continued education. These positions help youth, Parole Officers, Family Liaisons, and Halfway House staff to address reentry issues and positively enhance the transition experience. Current WDRS staffs do travel to other parts of the state to help youth and staff in other areas as needed.

Our goal at TJJD consists of supplying each youth with all the necessary tools needed for him/her to be successful upon reentering his/her prospective communities. These tools come from the collaboration of secure facility staff, education staff, and treatment staff. I encourage all TJJD staff to work with their local ERL's to make this an effective transition for the youth we serve.

With a youth's successful reentry, TJJD hopes to decrease the recidivism rate, complete obtainment of high school diploma or GED, see more youth enter and commit to full-time employment, and notice more youth entering and successfully graduating from a vocational training, community college, or university.

***"The starting point of all achievement is desire."***

Napoloen Hill, American Author



## Questions or Comments?

**SUPERVISOR**  
**Rebecca Garza**  
**512.490.7662**

**EVINS RJC**  
**Elva Benitez**  
**956.289.5547**

**GAINESVILLE**  
**Elizabeth Hevitz**  
**940.665.0701 ext. 268**

**GIDDINGS**  
**VACANT**

**MART**  
**Mary Garrity**  
**254.297.8301**

**MART RTC**  
**Robin Black**  
**254.297.8246**

**RON JACKSON**  
**Kevelle Bailey**  
**325.641.4243**



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